

Paul Robeson: A Portrait in Story & Song

Sunday, October 1, 2 PM
Cypress Golden Gate Senior Residence
19th Ave & Lawton, SF

Donations are requested to help finance a Robeson Songbook, with his favorite spirituals and songs that he sang around the world from the 1930s, 40s, and early 1950s, before being vilified by the State Department's witch hunt. Gray Panthers Remember Robeson Committee hopes to restore this repertoire to the churches and schools in order to inspire this generation of choristers with his music.



The Rockin' Solidarity Labor Chorus presents a musical biography of Paul Robeson, the great African American artist, athlete, and activist. The script is based on material gathered from primary sources by Alex Bagwell, a Chorus member and ILWU retiree, who interviewed many of Robeson's associates while they were still alive.

Robeson crossed paths with notable figures of his era, including W.E.B. DuBois, Lena Horne, and Harry Belafonte, but he also touched the lives of countless working men and women. He said, "I have always put my faith and confidence in the working people in all countries and of all colors. I truly believe that they constitute the greatest force in the world for the advancement of all people."

The concert will trace Robeson's journey from his youth in New Jersey to Rutgers University and then to Broadway, concert stages, and picket lines around the world. It also addresses Robeson's encounter with the House Un-American Activities Committee and the notorious Peekskill concert in 1949, at which racist thugs attacked the audience and the performers.

With solos by Bagwell and others, the Chorus will sing many of the spirituals and folk songs from Robeson's repertoire, in new arrangements by Chorus director Pat Wynne.

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